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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

February 11, 2003

Save America's Red Rock Wilderness

Dear Colleague:

I will soon reintroduce "America's Red Rock Wilderness Act", a bill that would designate a portion of the 22 million acres that the Bureau of Land Management administers in the state of Utah as permanent wilderness. I am inviting you to cosponsor it. In the 107th Congress this legislation (H.R. 1613) garnered 164 cosponsors.

The original version of my bill was introduced in 1989 by Representative Wayne Owens, who represented Utah in the House until 1992. The bill was drafted as an alternative to the BLM's own initial wilderness survey, which recommended protecting only about a third of the areas that my bill would cover. That effectively disparaged some of the most striking rockscapes anywhere in our country as surplus scenery.

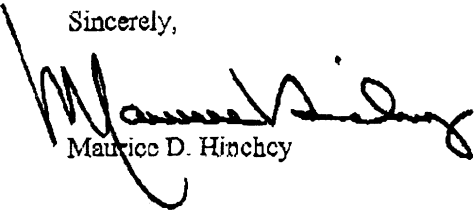
Congressman Owens based his bill on an alternate survey conducted by volunteers in Utah. They followed the BLM's own guidebook, but found the BLM had overlooked or ignored vast areas of wild country. Their findings were borne out in a 1999 re-inventory by the BLM, which found roughly the same acreage having "wilderness characteristics" as the volunteers had identified. My bill is based on the volunteers' survey of all BLM lands in Utah and includes more than 9 million acres.

Utah wilderness protection has been one of the most prominent environmental issues in recent Congresses. Ultimately, it will be up to Congress to decide whether these lands will be allowed to remain in their wild, natural state, or whether they will be opened to mining, road and dam construction, off-road vehicle use, and other activities that would destroy their special character.

My bill is endorsed by the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the National Parks and Conservation Association, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in Utah, and numerous other national and local conservation groups. The League of Conservation Voters has actively supported it as well. These lands in the Red Rock Wilderness are owned by all the American people. Let's keep these lands as they are for future generations to enjoy and admire. I hope that you will give strong consideration to joining those in Congress who are fighting for this irreplaceable American landscape.

Please contact me or Paul Brotherton at 5-6335 if you would like to cosponsor or if you have any questions about the bill.

Sincerely,



Maurice D. Hinchey